

INTERAGENCY STAFF COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION
THRESHOLD ANALYSIS OF RURAL/NONRURAL REVIEW RFR07-02

Oppose rural/nonrural review request for reconsideration RFR07-02.

Justification

The Board addressed whether it was necessary to assign Sitka for further analysis in a public meeting December 6-7, 2005. Subsequently, comment was received during the proposed rule comment period regarding review of Sitka's rural determination, and was addressed in a report by OSM made available to the Board and public prior to Board action on the final rule in December 2006. The approach taken by the Board relative to the rural status of Sitka did not constitute an inconsistent application of Federal regulations, for reasons detailed in the OSM report.

When a naval installation at Adak was closed during the 1990s, Adak's population of 4,633 in 1990 dropped to 316 in 2000. Adak's population decreased to a level below the 2,500 threshold existing in regulations, under which a community shall be deemed to be rural unless there are significant characteristics of a nonrural nature, or it is grouped with a nonrural area. The regulatory guidelines were applied to Adak. The Board did not find that Adak had significant characteristics of a nonrural nature.

The Federal review of existing rural/nonrural determinations, from the beginning, included multiple opportunities for input from the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, the State of Alaska, and the public. The Board review was intended to progressively winnow the scope of candidate communities for potential change in status, or grouping and status, from the approximately 300 places in Alaska. Assigned staff analysis work was focused on a technical record for communities and areas remaining in the forefront of Board consideration for such changes. In the specific case of road-connected communities on the Kenai Peninsula, the final rule addressed how the process provided for due consideration.